

Background.

The Department of Georgia has grown dramatically over the past 5 years. We have expanded from 15 Detachments, two of whom were failing with under the minimum number of members to retain their Charters, to 26 Detachments. Paid membership has grown from 841 on 31 March 2007 to 1368 on 31 March 2012, a 62.66% growth in five years. The leadership in these 12 new Detachments plus the 2 revitalized ones have little or no experience in the League. Making someone a Detachment Officer in this situation is like taking a recruit from Boot Camp, putting him or her in the FMF and saying, "Congratulations, you are now a Platoon Leader. Prepare your platoon to attack!"

The officers of most of these new Detachments, and many of the older ones, are not familiar with the mission of the Marine Corps League, its organization, bylaws, procedures, uniforms, resources available, benefits, etc. They need guidance and training, and they need it now.

When there were only 15 Detachments, the Department Commandant, although stretched, with help from his elected officers could work with all the Detachments. With 26 Detachments, and more to come, this will no longer work. Not only is the span of control unworkable, the geography of Georgia also makes it difficult. Georgia is the largest state, in area, east of the Mississippi. Our Detachments are spread all over the state, although, at this time, most are in the north. But to give an example of the times and distances involved, from the Dalton, GA Detachment to the Kings Bay Detachment is about 400 miles and takes about 7 hours, if Atlanta traffic is smooth. These times and distances make it impossible for the Department Commandant to visit with and guide all the Detachments. To make matters worse, Georgia could easily have double the number of Detachments and triple the number of members in the next 5 to 10 years.

Solution.

An obvious solution, which has been implemented by several Departments, is to place Detachments into Districts, and to elect or appoint Vice Commandants in each Districts. As the Department of Georgia Bylaws do not presently have a provision for the election of Vice Commandants, they will be appointed officers, appointed by the Commandant with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Also, as we are still growing and need to feel our way around, the number of Vice Commandants should be flexible until the Department matures and, even then, not be specific in the Department Bylaws. Nor should the District boundaries be fixed until such time as the "holes" in our geographic coverage are filled in and we have a true state-wide presence.

Requirement for Someone in the Position of District Vice Commandant

1. A District Vice Commandant must be a Regular Member, in good standing, of a Detachment within the District they represent.
2. Should be knowledgeable about recruiting programs within Detachments and for the establishment of new Detachments within their District.
3. Should be knowledgeable or make themselves knowledgeable about ALL the programs of the Marine Corps League.

Duties of District Vice Commandant

1. Should be responsible for assisting the Department Commandant and Board of Trustees in communicating with, supporting, and assisting Detachments within their Districts.
2. Shall visit, at least quarterly, each Detachment in his/her District. The purpose of the visit shall be to pass on information from the Department Commandant, Conference or Convention, to answer questions members may have and to assist the Detachment in recruitment programs. When presenting information to the Detachment for the Dept. Commandant, inform the Detachment Commandant before the meeting that you have some information to present during the Good of the League prior to the start of the meeting.
3. Shall offer advice and corrective actions needed for the proper running of meetings to the Commandant, but never do so in front of the membership or while the meeting is in progress. You should never interfere with the meeting.
4. Shall arrange for at least one (1) Annual District Meeting with the officers from each Detachment in the District and encourage them to invite their members to attend. (It has been shown that District Meetings are very productive, that they afford Detachments the opportunity to learn about each other and solve problems by exchanging experiences with similar problems). Plan your conference and inform the Department Commandant as to the time and location so that the Department Staff may attend to pass current information directly to the Detachment Commandants and assist in answering questions that may arise. Don't plan District meetings on the same weekend as Department Functions.
5. Shall emphasize the training of Detachment Officers and interested members in the conduct of the meetings, knowledge of Roberts Rules of Order, and the functions of the Marine Corps League.
6. Shall be aware of members with potential leadership skills at the Detachment and Department Levels and, if appropriate, shall encourage the Detachment Commandant to develop those members.
7. Shall note where Department Staff members, e.g., the Department Web Sergeant, can assist the Detachment Officers and members and enable such assistance.
8. Shall complete a report on each Detachment visit and send one copy to the Department Commandant and one to the Department Adjutant.

Duties of the Adjutant:

1. Keep copies of each Vice Commandant's Visit Report .
2. Prepare a report for the Department Commandant before each Quarterly Staff Meeting and Convention as to which Detachments each Vice Commandant visited and which he/she did not.

District Vice Commandant Visit Report

District _____ Distr. Vice Name _____ Date of Visit ____/____/____

Detachment Visited: Name _____ Det No. _____

Meeting Presided over by: _____ Office: _____

No. of Paid Members in Detachment (last Qtrly Nat'l) _____ No. in Arrears _____

Meeting Place: _____ No. in attendance: _____

Condition of Meeting Place: Neat: Y N Easy to get to: Y N Handicap Friendly: Y N

Meeting Room set up properly (Charter, Bible, Colors, gavel)? Y N Ritual Followed? Y N

Length of meeting: _____ Have a Program? Y N (If Y, Topic: _____)

Locator Page: Current Location and Mtg Time? Y N Officers and Contacts current? Y N

Have their own Web Page? Y N (If Y, URL is www._____)

Submit article for last Department Newsletter? Y N Disseminate Dept Newsletter to Members Y N

Give Eagle Scout Certificates? Y N Give JROTC Certificates? Y N

Have a Marine of the Year? Y N Have an Associate of the Year? Y N

Cmdt and Officers have copies of Guidebook for Officers? Y N

Is Detachment Incorporated? Y N (If not, do they need help in doing so? Y N)

Do they have a Mentoring Program? Y N If Y, who conducts it? _____

Did someone attend the last Quarterly Staff Meeting? Y N The last Convention? Y N

In what ways can the Department help the Detachment?

(When completed, send a copy to the Department Commandant and the Department Adjutant)

Before your visit:

1. Lay out a quarterly plan prior to the beginning of the quarter for visiting each Detachment. As you go through steps 1. and 2. below, make sure that the days and time are correct that that the Detachment will actually be meeting on that date. Some may have a special event planned for that month or day, such as a picnic or parade, and may not be conducting a meeting. Also, some Districts will have two or more Detachments that meet on the same day and time. A quarterly plan will avoid missing a visit or an aborted one.
2. Check Detachment's Locator Page for meeting day, time and place
3. Call Detachment Commandant.
 - a. If this is your first visit to the Detachment, tell him/her who you are, explain that you are the new District Vice Commandant, and that your function is to advise the Detachment Commandant, explain the Department Commandant's direction and programs, and help train the Detachment's Officers.
 - a. Tell him/her that you are planning a visit and want to verify time and place
 - b. Ask him/her what they will be wearing to the meeting (uniform, polo shirt, etc.) so that you can dress accordingly.
 - c. Ask him/her to give you a few minutes to speak during the Good of the League portion to discuss MCL and Department activities and programs.
 - d. Tell him/her that you would like to meet with him ALONE either before or after the meeting to discuss his view on the problems and opportunities his Detachment faces and to see how the Department can help.
 - e. Make sure that he/she knows that they still report to the Department Commandant; that your function is to advise and train.
 - f. How often and when do they hold Staff/Trustee meetings?
4. Contact the Department Paymaster or Commandant and get the Detachment's total Paid Members (Regular and Associate) and Number in Arrears. If possible, also get the same information for the previous quarter and the previous year.
5. Check the last Department Newsletter. Did the Detachment submit an article?
6. Prepare your remarks in advance. **Keep them brief.** Let them know you are open to questions. Cover the topics in general and fill in details if questions are asked about a topic.

The Visit:

1. Arrive early and introduce yourself to as many members as possible. Learn what you can about each members service in the Corps and League. Size them for future leadership positions. Do NOT talk

about yourself in detail. Tell them that you are representing the Department Commandant to advise the Detachment Commandant, explain the Department Commandant's direction and programs, and help train the Detachment's Officers.

2. Observe the meeting place. Is it neat? Is it easy to get to? Is it handicap accessible? If you were not yet a member, would you want to go there? Is the Charter in view, a Bible, National colors, and gavel available?

3. Is the Ritual followed?

4. If items arise during the meeting that you can offer meaningful input on, raise your hand and be recognized by the Commandant before offering it.

5. Be mindful of the time. Long meetings do not promote return attendees. If someone asks a question that will take a while to answer or is not of general interest, ask them to see you after the meeting and you will discuss it with them then, or get their phone number/email address and follow up after the meeting.

Meeting with the Commandant:

1. Go over the membership numbers. How involved is the Jr. Vice in Recruiting/Retention? How involved does the Jr. Vice get the membership? Do they have special recruiting events? Do they get PR in the local media?

2. Refer him/her to the Professional Development Course on the National MCL webpage. Ask that they extend their Staff/Trustee meetings by 30 minutes and devote that time to going through the PDC.

3. Encourage submission of articles to the Department Newsletter. Make sure that he/she knows that the Department Newsletter should be sent electronically to every member who has email access.

4. What activities are they involved in? Toys for Tots? Eagle Scout presentations? JROTC awards? Fallen Marine Program? (Show examples of the Eagle Scout, JROTC and FMP Certificates. These programs are low cost yet recognize service and give visibility to the Detachment)

5. Does he/she and the officers each have a copy of the Guidebook for Officers?

6. Does the Detachment have a Marine of the Year? An Associate of the Year? Are awards made to members who deserve them? (Give him a copy of the awards he is authorized to make)

7. Did they nominate someone for the Department Marine of the Year? Associate of the Year? If they have a Detachment Marine of the Year, they have a ready-made nominee for the Department MOY.

8. Do they have any fund raisers? If so, what did they do? How successful was it? How were the funds distributed? How many members participated in it? Do they need ideas that have worked for other Detachments?

9. Are they incorporated? If not, do they need help to do it?

10. Do they have a Mentoring Program for new Members? Who conducts it?

11. Although your primary function is to improve two-way communications between Detachment and Department, it would be instructive for him/her or another officer from the Detachment to attend the Quarterly Staff Meetings and for several members to attend the Department Convention. The Department can only be as good as the participation of its members. RED HATS RULE!